
Excel Corner: Recovering Data from Damaged Worksheets

What to do when a system crash, virus attack or other nasty corrupts your Excel spreadsheet? Don't panic. The majority of your data will still be there, all you have to do is retrieve it. Here are eight suggestions to try to get back your data.

1. Switch off your PC and then restart. (Simple but often fixes problems.)
2. Run Scandisk to check for file system errors and bad sectors on your hard disk. Close all programs then from the windows start menu select All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Scandisk. If you can't find it there then open My Computer, right-click the hard drive and select Properties. Go to Tools and run the Error Checking option.
3. If you can open the file in Excel, do so then save it in HTML or SYLK format. Choose to save the entire workbook. Close the file then re-open it and save it under a different name in Excel format again.
4. In Excel 2003, Use the Open and Repair Command - see below for details.
5. Open the file in Word. Select the resulting table, then copy and paste the table into Excel. Formulas will be lost but the data will be there.
6. Use External References to link to the file - see below for details.
7. Extract Data from a Chart - see below for details.
8. Use a commercial Excel Recovery program - see below for details.

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In Excel 2003, Using the Open and Repair Command

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1. On the File menu, click Open.
2. In the Open dialog box, select your damaged file.
3. Click the arrow on the Open button, and then click Open and Repair.
4. When you are prompted, click Repair to try to recover your most recent changes. If Excel cannot repair your workbook, click Extract Data instead of Repair.
5. If your workbook contains formulas, Excel prompts you to select either Convert to values or Recover Formulas.
6. If you receive the following error message, click Yes. "The document file name caused a serious error the last time it was opened. Would you like to continue opening it?"
7. Save your recovered workbook.

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Using External References to Link to the File

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1. On the File menu, click Open. Browse from the current folder to the folder that contains the damaged file, and click Cancel.
2. Click New on the File menu. Click workbook then OK.
3. Type =File Name!A1 in cell A1 of the new workbook, where File Name is the name of the damaged workbook. If the Select sheet dialog box appears, select the appropriate sheet and click OK.
4. Select cell A1 and on the Edit menu click Copy. Select an area that is slightly larger than the range of cells that contain data in the damaged file, then click

Untitled

Paste on the Edit menu.

5. Select the range of cells again, click Copy on the Edit menu.

6. On the Edit menu, click Paste Special. Select Values and click OK. This removes the links to the damaged file and leaves only the data.

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Extract Data from a Chart

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Microsoft provides a macro to retrieve data from a chart even when the data is in an external worksheet or workbook. When the source data to a chart is lost, the data might still be retrieved from the chart itself.

Excel 2002, 2003 see <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/300643/>

Excel 2000 see <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/213814/>

Excel 98 and earlier see <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/137016/EN-US/>

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Use a Commercial Excel Recovery program